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DPNR & DPW PROVIDE CLARIFICATION ON THE PAUL E. JOSEPH STADIUM

ST. CROIX - The Department of Public Works, Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) office is responsible for the planning, construction, renovation, and improvement of government infrastructure facilities, as directed and prioritized by the Office of the Governor.

While the Paul E. Joseph Stadium project has experienced several delays and appears to the layman that little work has been done, much of the completed work is in fact underground. However, the project is currently on hold as the department awaits a response from FEMA on its Conditional Letter of Map Revision (CLOMR) application. This application was necessary to amend the current map, as a portion of the property lies in a floodplain area.

Contrary to recent reports, the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) and the Department of Public Works were aware that the property was in a floodplain area and determined that this would not affect the viability of the future plans for the stadium. A decision was made that the project would be submitted for permitting in phases to allow for the design process to be finalized – once finalized it would then be submitted and reviewed.

On November 25, DPW received a response from FEMA indicating that the application is under review and a formal request for additional information would be sent. Additionally, they advised that the average processing time for applications from start to finish is approximately six months, with some simpler cases requiring less time and more complex cases requiring more time. As a matter of fact, FEMA is scheduled to meet with the PEJ Stadium contractor this Friday, to discuss expediting the approval of the application. Based on the initial engineering data, it was determined that there is a high probability the approval will happen quickly.

“The decision to submit a CLOMR application was the best option to keep the project on budget, while maintaining the requirements of the floodplain regulations,” said DPNR Commissioner, J.P. Oriol. The department had two options to address the floodplain challenge: request a No-Rise analysis or a map amendment – CLOMR.

The claim, in recent reports, indicating DPNR had previously issued a building permit for the stadium, but pulled it back only after realizing FEMA considers the stadium grounds a floodplain is false. On August 4, 2020, work on the PEJ project was stopped and the permit was pulled because the permits for the next phase of work were not approved.

Given that progress is halted until the CLOMR is accepted and the building permit is re-issued, the balance of the construction will resume no later than May of 2021.

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